Vol VIII. Numb. 4

THE OBSERVATOR.

Remarks on a Letter and Dialogue for encouraging our Sea-men, and ſpeedy Manning the Navy, without Impreſſing. *On ſome of our Sea-mens Grievances; and on the Poſture of Affairs in* Italy, Catalonia, *and* Portugal.

From **Wednesday**, February 9. to **Saturday**, February 12. 1709.

Country-m. HEre's a Letter to you, Maſter, about encouraging the Sea-men, and ſpeedy Manning the Navy, without Impreſſing.

Obſ. You may read it, *Roger*; tho' I think you and I talk'd a great deal on that Subject laſt Year, to little Purpoſe. I wiſh this Gentleman may have better Succeſs.

Country-m. 'Tis thus, Maſter:

S I R,

'I Having met with a little Book, entitl'd, *A Di-*
'*alogue between a Member of Parliament, and a*
'*Commander of a Ship, about encouraging the Sea-men of*
'Great Britain, *and the ſpeedy Manning the Navy,*
'*without Impreſſing*; and I living in the Country,
'and not being converſant with thoſe Gentlemen
'that underſtand the Navy, I deſire the Favour of
'your Opinion of it. I will give you one Obſer-
'vation of mine, which is, That I am very confi-
'dent, that it muſt needs coſt her Majeſty a vaſt
'Sum every Year in Bounty-Money, and Charge
'of Impreſſing Sea-men; for I have known a Preſs-
'Smack, that has been out two Months, and has
'preſs'd but five Men that have been ſent into the
'Service, then thoſe five Men muſt of Neceſſity
'coſt her Majeſty a great many ſix Pounds a-piece;
'and if Bounty-Money, and Charge of Impreſſing,
'ſtands the Queen in any Thing near 180000 *l.*
'*per Ann.* it muſt needs ſtand the Nation in a
'much greater Sum. I am of Opinion we had bet-
'ter give the Sea-men what Encouragement the
'Captain propoſes. Pray let us have your Opini-
'of it in your next. I am, *&c.*

T. M.

Obſ. The Gentleman writes like one that wiſhes his Country well, *Roger*. Pray read the Book, and give me an Account of the chief Contents of it.

Country-m. The Title, Maſter, ſhews the Deſign of the Book. I will read the chief Contents, if you pleaſe.

Obſ. There has been enough writ and ſaid upon that Subject, *Roger*, to open the Eyes of the Nation, and to oblige thoſe concern'd, to take effectual Care of our Fleet, which is the Walls of our Nation, and, under God, not only our chief Security againſt Enemies Abroad, but the chief Thing that enables us to annoy them, and carry the War into their own Bowels, or at leaſt to touch them in the moſt ſenſible Part; but ſince the Addreſſes of our Noble Patriots, the Lords, on that Subject, have not had a due Regard, as their Lordſhips themſelves have ſometimes complain'd, we are not to wonder, that the Advices of private Perſons are over-look'd. However, let's hear what this Gentleman ſays, *Roger*.

Country-m. He ſays, Maſter, that the Act for Convoys and Cruiſers, and the *American*-Act, are excellent Acts indeed, and might be of great Advantage to theſe Kingdoms; but there are ſtill ſuch Hardſhips upon our Sea-men, that they come into the Service with much Reluctancy.

Obſ. Why don't you ſpeak to the Parliament-men you choſe, *Roger*, to enquire into the Reaſons why thoſe excellent Acts, and particularly the *American*-Act, has not had more Effect? You remember the Addreſs of our Lords, about keeping a ſufficient Squadron at *Jamaica*, to protect our own Trade, and annoy that of our Enemies: But however it has happen'd, God knows, when honeſt Men have been ſent into thoſe Parts with Ships of War, they have been ſo hamper'd either with Cowards or Knaves in Company, that they were not capable of doing the Good they intended to do; but ſome of them have been ſacrific'd, as Admiral *Benbo*, and others narrowly eſcap'd the ſame Fate, as Commodore *Wager*; therefore I think, that none ought to be employ'd as Commiſſion-Officers in our Fleet, but Men of Merit, and honeſt Principles, and not ſuch as have nothing elſe to recommend them, but Money or Friends.

Country-m. I think you are in the Right, Maſter. I will ſpeak to my Repreſentatives to enquire what has hinder'd the Effect of the *American*-Act. I was in Hopes, when that Act paſs'd, our rich Merchants, and other money'd Citizens, wou'd have join'd together to have improv'd the Advantages that Act gave them to annoy our Enemy, to enlarge our Trade, and to bring Home Bullion; and ſince we have Numbers both of Merchants and Citizens, who have Zeal enough, and underſtand their Intereſt well enough to have purſu'd ſuch a Deſign, I think they ought to be free, and lay before the Parliament what it is that has hitherto obſtructed it. But I go on with what the Gentleman ſays, Maſter.

Obſ. Pray do, *Roger*.

Country-m. The firſt Diſcouragement he ſays our Sea-men labour under, Maſter, is, That when they are out three or four Years on foreign Voyages, their Families are not pay'd any Part of their Wages, which makes it impoſſible for a Woman that has three or four Children, to maintain herſelf and them.

Obſ. If it be ſo as the Gentleman ſays, *Roger*, 'tis an intollerable Hardſhip indeed, and fit to be redreſs'd; for that muſt needs either make thoſe poor Women and their Children a Burden to their reſpective Pariſhes and Neighbours, or take unlawful Means for a Subſiſtence; which frequently iſſues in the Ruin both of Soul and Body; contributes very much to the Corruption of Morals, by making the Sea-mens Wives and Daughters turn lewd, and forces their younger Children either to beg or pilfer, and many Times ruins Chandlers, and others, who, out of Compaſſion, give them Credit, on the Account of the Pay of their Huſbands and Fathers; therefore I hope our Repreſentatives will enquire into thoſe Things.

Country-m. The ſecond Diſcouragement, Maſter, he ſays, is, That when our Sea-men come Home from long Voyages, they have Tickets made out for their Wages, 'till their Ships are pay'd, and are many Times forc'd to ſell them at 15, 20, or 25 *per Cent.* Diſcount, to ſupply their own Wants, and thoſe of their Families, for the Sea-man have no Credit now; by which many hundreds of their Families are reduc'd to a ſtarving Condition.

Obſ. That's a very great Hardſhip indeed, *Roger*, and expoſes the poor Sea-men and their Families to the Avarice of Ticket-Buyers, who will be ſure to make their Advantage of the Sailers Neceſſities. But how comes it to paſs, that our Sea-men have leſs Credit than formerly?

Country-m.

Country-m. The Gentleman ſays, Maſter, that the Act of 1705. which enacts, That no Sea-man ſhall be arreſted for a Debt under 20 *l.* to any one Perſon, and under 60 *l.* to ſeveral, hinders any Body to truſt them, ſince there are few of them capable to advance any Thing near thoſe Sums, for the Supply of their crying Neceſſities; and that makes them ſell their Tickets at any Rate, rather than themſelves and their Families ſhould ſtarve.

Obſ. That's a miſerable Caſe indeed, *Roger*, when what was ſo generouſly deſign'd by our Legiſlators, for the Relief of the poor Sea-men, ſhould turn to their Diſadvantage. What Remedy does the Gentleman propoſe for this?

Country-m. He propoſes, Maſter, that the Seamen may have Tickets given them every ſix Months for what is due to them; that our Repreſentatives would be pleas'd to think of ſuch Meaſures as may enable the Treaſurer of the Navy to pay the ſaid Tickets, whenever they become due, which would make their Tickets as current as Bank-Notes; encourage Sea-men to come into the Service; prevent their ſelling them at Under-Rates, and by Conſequence all the Miſchiefs which befal themſelves, their Families, and the whole Nation, for Want of ſome ſuch Method.

Obſ. All that we can do, *Roger*, is, to lay thoſe Things before the two Houſes; and pray God to direct them to a proper Redreſs of ſuch Grievances. In order to which, I ſhould humbly propoſe, that a thorough Enquiry may be made into the Application of the Money which is given to the Uſe of the Fleet; for good Laws ſignify nothing, if they be not put duly in Execution. But we muſt adjourn this Subject to another Time. Pray tell me your News from Abroad: How do Things go in *Catalonia*, *Portugal*, and *Italy*?

Country-m. For *Italy*, Maſter, the *Gazette* tells us, there's an Accommodation concluded between the Emperor and the Pope; which, 'tis hop'd, may prevent the *French* King's Deſign of embroiling our *Roman* Catholick Allies; for he would have been glad of ſetting them to cut one anothers Throats; and he might readily have effected it, had not the Emperor's Prudence prevented the Pope's Retreat to *Avignon*; where he muſt hvae been altogether in the *French* K.'s Power, and oblig'd to iſſue his Excommunications againſt our Catholick Allies; ſo that the Emperor himſelf could not have been ſafe in his Bed-Chamber, or at the Altar, but might have been expos'd to Stabs or Poyſon by bigotted Monks, Prieſts, or Jeſuits, as ſeveral of his Predeceſſors, and other Great Potentates, have been.

Obſ. I am very glad to hear of that Accommodation, *Roger*, but with it had been concluded ſooner, and that none of our Allies, or others, have had any Hand in delaying it; for the Loſs of a few Weeks in this Conjuncture, may be hard to retrieve; therefore I hope our Repreſentatives will enquire into thoſe Things, that we be bubbl'd by none of our Allies, or otherwiſe.

Country-m. As to *Catalonia* and *Portugal*, Maſter, I can't tell what to make of our Accounts from thence; for one Day we hear, that Affairs there are in a good Poſture, and another we are inform'd, that the Confederate Troops in thoſe Parts are in a very ill Condition, few in Number, and have neither Money, Cloths, nor Victuals; that K. *Charles* is not able to ſtand his Ground, nay, not ſo much as to act defenſively. You know what ſtrange Suggeſtions there have been, and ſtill are, as to that Suſpenſion of Hoſtilities betwixt the Frontiers of *Spain* and *Portugal*, on Pretence, that the Peaſants may preſerve their Cattel, and cultivate their Ground: and you know what Suſpicion there was of *French* Influence in that Court, during the Reign of the late Don *Pedro*; which the preſent King of *Portugal*, tho' undoubtedly well affected to the common Cauſe, may find it hard to ſtruggle with; for the beſt of Princes may be hamper'd and betray'd by a bad or careleſs Miniſtry.

Obſ. You ſay very well, *Roger*; but ſince our noble Commons are ſo generous in giving large Sums for the Support of our Confederates; and that they have acted like good Patriots, in calling for Accounts of the Management of our Money, we have no Reaſon to doubt but they will take Care to enquire whether our Allies have the full Number of Troops that we pay for; and how our own Troops and theirs in thoſe Parts are us'd, that King *Charles* may be duly ſupported; for if he be forc'd out of *Catalonia*, for Want of it, I am afraid our Advantages elſewhere will ſcarce make up the Ballance.

Advertiſements.

☞ The Scourge of Venus and Mercury, repreſented in a Treatiſe of the Venereal Diſeaſe; together with an Appendix in anſwer to Mr. John Marten's Reflexions thereupon. By J. Smtelaer, Practitioner in Phyſick. Price of the Appendix alone bound 6d, together 3 s. 6d. Sold by R. Goſling at the Mitre in Fleet-ſtreet, W. Carter at the Green Dragon in St. Paul's Church-yard, J. Phillips at the black Bull in Cornhill, H. Ribotteau at the Crown near Cecil-ſtreet in the Strand, B. Picard at the 3 Bibles in the Minories, J. Harding in St. Martins-lane near Long-acre, J. Morphew near Stationers-hall, and by the Author at his Dwelling-houſe (late the Duke of Leeds's) in high Holborn, over againſt little Turn-ſtile.

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